

# Reconstructive Foot & Ankle Institute, LLC

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## HOW TO USE CRUTCHES



The top of crutches should reach to 1-1 ½ inches below your armpits when standing straight up. The handgrips of the crutches should be even with the top of your hip line. Your elbows should bend a bit when you use the handgrips. Hold the top of the crutches tightly to your sides, and use your hands to absorb the weight. Don't let the tops of the crutches press into your armpits.

**Walking:** Lean forward slightly and put your crutches approximately one foot ahead of you. Begin your step with your injured foot or leg, but shift your weight to the crutches instead of the injured foot. Your body should swing forward between the crutches. Finish the step normally with the non-injured leg. Once your non-injured leg is on the ground, move your crutches ahead in preparation for the next step. Keep your eyes ahead of you and not on your feet.

**Sitting:** Back up to a sturdy chair. Put your injured foot or leg in front of you and both crutches in one hand. Use the other hand to feel for the seat of your chair. Slowly lower yourself into it. Lean your crutches upside down in a handy location. To stand up, inch yourself to the front of the chair. Hold both crutches in the hand on your good leg side. Push yourself up and stand on the good leg.

**Stairs:** Face the stairway, hold the handrail with one hand and tuck both crutches under your armpit on the other side. When you're going up, lead with your good foot, keeping the injured foot raised behind you. When you're going down, hold your injured foot up in front, and hop down each stair on your good foot. Take it one step at a time. You may want someone to help you, at least the first time. If the stairway has no handrails, use the crutches under both arms and hop up or down each step on your good leg, using more strength. An easier method is to sit on the stairs and inch yourself up and down each step. Start by sitting on the lowest stair with your injured leg out in front. Hold both crutches flat against the stairs in your opposite hand. Scoot your bottom up to the next step, using your free hand and good leg for support. Face the same direction when you go down the stairs this way.